

Spring 1-15-2014

ENG 4763-001: Fiction Writing

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ENG 4763: Fiction Writing
Spring 2014, Th 3:30-6pm, Coleman Hall 2120

Professor Lania Knight, PhD
Office Hours: T 11–12pm and 2–3pm, W 1–2pm, Th 11–12pm, Coleman 3751
Email: ldknight@eu.edu

In this course, students will deepen their understanding of fiction writing in general and the short story in particular. This course is a workshop and will include writing, attendance at local creative writing events, and discussion of published short stories, essays on craft, and fellow students' short stories. As an intermediate course, students are expected to be familiar with the fundamental elements of fiction as explained in books like Mike Kardos' *The Art and Craft of Fiction: A Writer's Guide*, or Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*.

Required Texts:

Baxter, Charles and Peter Turchi, eds. *Bringing the Devil to His Knees: The Craft of Writing and the Fiction Life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 2001.
Díaz, Junot. *This Is How Your Lose Her*. New York: Riverhead. 2013.
Hills, Rust. *Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular*. New York: Mariner. 2000.
Munro, Alice. *Dear Life: Stories*. New York: Vintage International. 2013.
One additional short story collection (TBA)
One current issue of a literary magazine (TBA)

Grades:

Weekly Responses	300
Workshop Submission I	100
Workshop Submission II	100
Workshop Responses	100
Short Story Collection Pres.	100
Lit Mag Presentation	100
Final Portfolio	200

Total 1000 points

Be Prepared for Class

To prepare for each class, please do the following:

1. Be ready to participate in activities
2. Bring your textbooks and a notebook with you to class
3. Read the assigned material **before** class
4. Respond via Dropbox on Desire2Learn to the assigned reading **before** class

Reading Responses

You'll write responses to the readings for each class, which may or may not be shared during class (depends on time available). These responses are due via Dropbox on Desire2Learn by 3pm on the day they are to be discussed. Each response is worth around 20 points. For readings on craft, respond by writing either 1) a List of Ten, which means ten of anything about the reading,

such as words you needed to look up, items you found interesting or confusing, or phrases you had questions about. ANYTHING GOES. Write page and paragraph numbers, 450–500 words per list, OR 2) good, old-fashioned notes of 450–500 words (with page and paragraph numbers). For short story selections, you are free to write a List of Ten or old fashioned notes (see above), or, if you need a prompt to get you going, you may answer questions from “checklist: read like a writer” on pp.5–6 in Mike Kardos’ *The Art and Craft of Fiction*. Your total response for the short story selections (no matter how many stories are assigned) for a given class should be 450–500 words long.

Attendance

I keep attendance. You may miss up to two classes. If you miss a third class, you will fail the course. Two late arrivals = one absence. Exceptions will be made only for documented emergencies and documented school activities.

Workshop Submissions

For each workshop, submit one complete short story. Each submission should be 10–15 pages (2,500–3,750 words) in length. Please do not go below or beyond the word count. You are free to write about any topic, but the material must be new and created for this class. Submissions will be graded for originality and risk. Does your story say something interesting? Is the writing elegant? Does it pull the reader in? Workshop sign up will take place early in the semester. Your stories will be due before workshop and will be sent to classmates and the instructor via Desire2Learn. **Note for Grad Students:** You must submit three stories for class. The first story may be written prior to class, but the second and third must be new.

Workshop Responses

For each workshop submission, type a one-page single-spaced letter (450–500 words) to the writer. Email this response to the writer and to the instructor by 3pm the day of workshop. Your letter should address what you see happening on the page (describe the content and form), as well as questions for the author. The most important task of this letter is to reflect back to the writer what you see happening on the page and to pose questions and predictions so the writer can begin to see if you, the reader, have understood what they have attempted. Please send one copy of the letter to the writer via Panthermail and one copy to the instructor via Desire2Learn.

Short Story Collection Presentation

Each student will choose a short story collection to present to the class. Read the entire collection, select two or three stories for the entire class to read, and then on the day of the presentation, lead discussion about the stories and the collection. On the day of the presentation, submit a 4–5 page (1,000–1,250 word) analysis of the collection, answering questions about the writer and the stories (form, style, content, influences), as well as what makes the book come together as a collection. For the presentation, describe the collection overall and lead discussion of the two or three stories selected for the entire class to read.

Literary Magazine Presentation

Each student will obtain one current issue of a literary magazine (either through purchase or through Booth Library) and give a presentation to the class to describe what the magazine is about. Topics to cover include format/layout, descriptions of content, analysis of editorial

choices, and what is appealing (or not) about this magazine as a reader and as a writer. Presentations should be 8–10 minutes and include A/V and/or handouts.

Creative Writing Events

Attendance at three creative writing events during the semester is required. After attending an event, please submit a 450-500-word response along with your Reading Responses due before the class period immediately following the event.

- 1) **Jan 24–25:** Lions in Winter at the Doudna Fine Arts Center (attend at least 3 events/sessions)
- 2) **Feb 20:** Reading by Letitia Moffitt
- 3) Choose one of the following: 1) **Jan 30 OR Feb 1:** Elizabeth Wong Residency, 2) **Feb 4:** Reading by poet Roger Reeves, 3) **Apr 5:** Lecture by UIUC writer/professor Audrey Petty

Final Portfolio

The Final Portfolio consists of two elements:

- 1) a significant revision of one of your stories, and
- 2) a reflection essay. For this essay, write an 8–10-page (2,000–2,500) reflection on the course readings, the activities in class, the stories you wrote, your revision, and any other material relevant to your development as a writer. This essay should connect the course materials and activities with your understanding of writing, and it should also demonstrate your lively engagement with the class and the process of writing over the span of the semester.

Students with Documented Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, you must make arrangements through the Office of Disability Services; you should contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Tentative Schedule (items will be clarified and may also be added or removed as needed during the semester)

Week One

Thursday, 1/16: Intro and overview; workshop sign up; story collection sign up

Week Two

Thursday, 1/23: Discuss “Fairy Tale is Form, Form is Fairy Tale” by Kate Bernheimer; stories by Alissa Nutting (TJ); Workshop (Sean); Lit Mag Presentation (Hannah)

Friday 1/24-25: Lions in Winter at the Doudna Fine Arts Center

Week Three

Thursday, 1/30: Visiting Playwright: Elizabeth Wong; Workshop (TJ and Hannah); Discuss *Devil* pp. 18-30 “I Know Myself Real Well. That’s the Problem”; Lit Mag Pres. (Sean)

Thursday 1/30 and Saturday 2/1: Elizabeth Wong Lecture/Workshop

Week Four

Tuesday, 2/4: Reading by poet Roger Reeves (Time/Place TBA)

Thursday, 2/6: Discuss *This is How You Lose Her*; Workshop (David and Tanner); Lit Mag Presentation (TJ)

Week Five

Thursday, 2/13: Discuss *Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular*, Intro through “‘Epiphany’ as a Literary Term” (vii–24); stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Week Six

Thursday, 2/20: Stories by Letitia Moffitt (Sean); workshop; lit mag presentations
Evening Reading by Letitia Moffitt at Doudna Lecture Hall

Week Seven

Thursday, 2/27: **NO CLASS**: AWP in Seattle

Week Eight

Thursday, 3/6: Discuss *Dear Life: Stories*; stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Week Nine

Thursday, 3/13: **SPRING BREAK**

Week Ten

Thursday, 3/20: stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Week Eleven

Thursday, 3/27: stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Week Twelve

Thursday, 4/3: stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Saturday, 4/5: Lecture by Audrey Petty

Week Thirteen

Thursday, 4/10: stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Week Fourteen

Thursday, 4/17: stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Week Fifteen

Thursday, 4/24: stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Week Sixteen

Thursday, 5/1: stories; workshop; lit mag presentations

Monday, 5/5: DUE at 3pm: Final Portfolio